

A GUIDE

FOR

NEW SURF BOAT

SWEEPHANDS.

FORWARD.

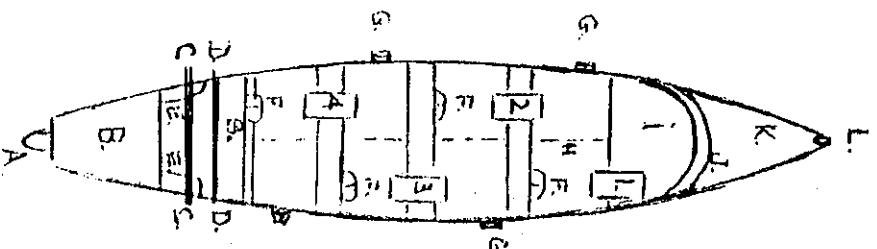
A new fully equipped surf boat costs nearly the same as a small new motor vehicle. But, unlike the vehicle, there are no instructions on how to operate the craft or descriptions of its main features.

The following notes are provided to try and assist learner sweeps, on how to control and understand this craft.

They must always remember that a surf boat is like a beautiful woman, you never really understand them till their asleep in the boat shed.

MAIN FEATURES OF A SURF BOAT.

- A. Sweep rowlock
- B. Stern deck.
- C. First quarter bar.
- D. Second quarter bar.
- E. Stern floor deck.
- F. Foot stretchers.
- G. Rowlocks.
- H. Keel.
- I. Bow tank.
- J. Splash board.
- K. Bow deck.
- L. Bow stem.



THE FUNDAMENTALS.

N.B.

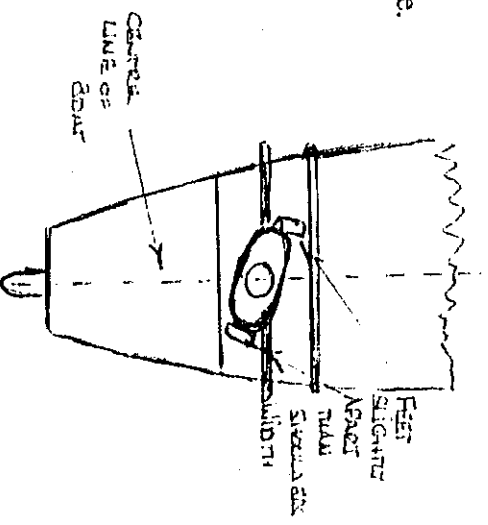
These following instructions are for beginner sweeps and should be carried out in protected waters. I.E. Lakes, rivers, harbours.

Left handed sweeps use direct opposites.

Deciding which hand to use in sweeping a boat is up to the individual. A newcomer should stand in the boat and feel which position is most comfortable. Body balance should be the deciding factor.

BALANCE and STANCE.

The most common problem for new sweeps, is not understanding that their balance in the boat is more important than pulling or pushing on the sweep oar. Before the crew begins to row the sweep must feel comfortable, their weight evenly distributed, and the boat on a even keel. The crew must also be comfortable. The sweeps legs are astride the first quarter bar, their feet apart, slightly wider than their shoulder width. Similar to a boxers stance when he shapes up.



[Fig.1.]

SWEEP OAR.

A sweep must have absolute respect for the most important operational part of a surf boat. To start with, treat it like a walking stick and try to use it to balance your movements in the boat. At first when you lose your balance in the boat, you will naturally grasp the quarter bar. This reaction should be transferred to the sweep oar. Treat the oar as your "earth" to the water.

Compare it to the power conductor pole on a electric tram. If the pole is dislodged from the power line the tram becomes inoperable. The sweep oar has the same effect on the boat, if it is allowed to lose its "earthing" effect.

As you gain confidence, you will find that steering a surf boat is a combination of balance and ability to steer the craft with a "leaning" stance. You may look as though you are resting on the oar, but in fact you are controlling oar and craft, using perfect body balance and weight. The ultimate aim of a sweep is to control the craft with body weight only.

POSITION OF SWEEP OAR IN RELATION TO THE SWEEPS BODY.

Having balanced your body correctly in the boat you then grasp the sweep oar firmly. It should be pulled through the sweep rowlock to approximate 1.5m inboard and the tip of the handle should protrude about 100mm past the extended left hand of the sweep. [Fig.2.]

The most common fault with new sweeps is that they allow the sweep oar to force the inboard portion of the oar, to close to their body. This causes their body and right arm to cramp together and they lose their balance and either let go of the oar and grab the quarter bar, or fall onto the oar causing it to come out of the water. To correct this problem, the handle of the oar should always be held away from the body at least 300mm [Fig3.]

This position then pin points the correct position of the outboard sweep oar. We will call this the **STEERING POCKET**.

Fig. 2.

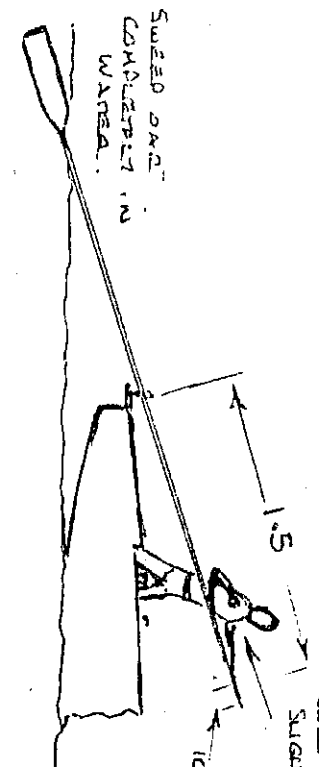
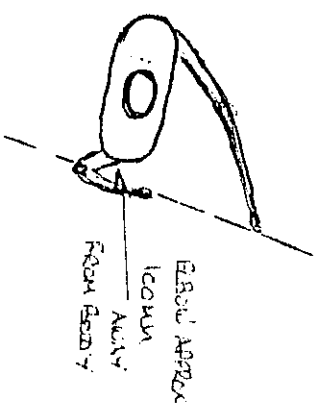


Fig. 3.



CONTROL OF BLADE IN STEERING POCKET.

To have success as a sweep this is a very important area to determine. The exact position of the pocket will differ from sweep to sweep and depends on their height, weight, position of oar held inboard and prevailing conditions.

When the boat is in motion the working area is about 500mm to 700mm [Fig. 4.]

This depends on how much the hands and forearms are moved inboard, which should not be more than 300mm [Fig. 5.]. It is essential that the sweep gains skill to continually control the blade, that at all time is completely submerged. [Fig. 2].

To keep the oar blade in this pocket requires constant work, with a similar wrist and forearm action to a rower feathering their oar [Fig. 6.]. This constant movement is only slight. If a large course change is required, it is preferable to take short quick strokes rather than big sweeping strokes. At all cost keep the blade in the steering pocket, otherwise you will lose your balance.

When you have your crew rowing comfortably on smooth water you can experiment controlling the sweep oar with your right hand and forearm only. Think of the oar as a tiller in a small row boat. A experienced sweep can control the craft in calm waters by just using the wrist.

Fig. 5.

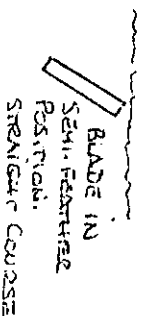
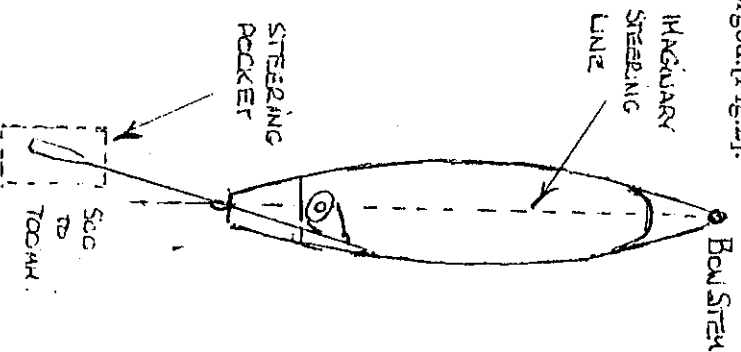


Fig. 4.



STEERING A STRAIGHT COURSE.

When the crew begins to row, with the sweep oar blade in the correct steering pocket position, the sweep will immediately feel the oar come towards the body. There will also be a surging sensation that will pull the body backwards, both these reactions will cause the novice sweep problems and they must be ready to react in a proper manner, with the oar handle in its correct position. [Fig. 6]. The surge is absorbed with the body leaning slightly forward and the knees slightly bent. Compare it to someone throwing a medicine ball at your stomach.

Now the sweep has to concentrate on keeping a straight course. This is achieved by making sure the head is in a direct line between the boats stem and the sweep rowlock. We will call this the IMAGINARY STEERING LINE-I.S.L. [Fig. 4.]

A course correction will be necessary when ever the bow starts to deviate from the line of the course the sweep has set. It is easier for the sweep to have the bow bearing very slightly to the right, using body weight control. Release this pressure and the craft quickly returns to the exact course bearing.

see page

COURSE CHANGE TO RIGHT.

[Fig.7-8-9.]

Push sweep oar away from your body and at the same time roll handle towards yourself, this feathers the blade.

The oar handle is pushed till the left arm and shoulders are fully extended [Fig.5.]. Try not to let your head get out of THE IMAGINARY STEERING LINE.

There is only about 300mm of comfortable sweep handle movement [Fig.5.] and it may be necessary to take a series of short strokes to gain the course required.



FIG.5.

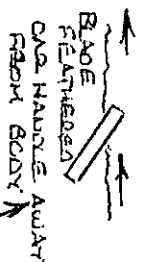


FIG. 7.

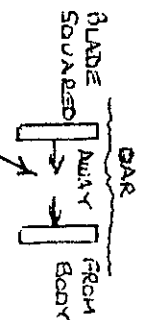


FIG. 8.

RIGHT HAND COURSE CHANGE

COURSE CHANGE TO LEFT.

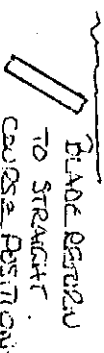
This is much easier to perform than a right hand change, as it only requires a pushing motion. With the blade in the correct trailing straight course position, it is squared up, and the sweep leans on the oar handle and pushes it with body weight. there is hardly any movement of the handle away from the body. You can compare this action, to trying to push over a post. The power is generated from the sweeps left leg. Care must be taken, not to let the head go past the I.S.L., or the body weight allowed to bear down on the oar handle. Otherwise you are liable to lose your balance and fall over. Again quick short correct pushes are the best method to effect a left hand course change. After each push the sweep only has to stop pushing and the forward motion of the craft will bring the blade and handle back to the original straight course position.

STEERING INTO A PREVAILING WIND.

This is a quite a strain on the sweeps forearms and wrists, as constant course correction is necessary. If the wind is from the left of a straight course then it is wise to set the bow and I.S.L. very slightly to the sweeps left hand.

If wind from right then course is slightly right. On many occasions, keeping a straight course will see the wind waves on the left or right side of the boat an it will be necessary to steer the boat directly into these waves. there are two alternatives, you can head into the wind for a long period which will take you well away from the designated course

FIG. 9.



and is similar to a sailing boats large zig zag maneuver. The cross wind section back to a correct course is very tough on your crew [Fig. 10]. The other method and preferred

preferred way, is to continually work your boat into two or three wind waves and the change course fractionally to stay on a reasonable straight course [Fig.11.] Although the sweep has to work much harder, progress for the crew is much easier. The last method is the only way if you are racing.

BODY BALANCE INTO WAVE CHOP OR SWELL.

No wind wave or swell is exactly the same in formation and the boat will react differently to each encounter. To help the crew, to keep the boat on a even keel, the seep will be forced to shift their feet and body weight. The feet are moved in a slow sliding shuffle and the torso swayed from side to side to counteract the boats roll or bow bump. It is very important that the sweep maintains a firm "earth" with the sweep oar to the ocean and wave formation. When a sweep attains this feeling they are well on the way to having confidence in their ability.

Remember to be a good sweephand, it is imperative that you have a relaxed compact stance. All body, arm and wrist movements are carried out firmly without any sign of excessive jerking or pushing on the oar. A sweep ~~that~~ mgs at the oar like a dog with a piece of rag is not in control of the boat and is upsetting the crew.

COOL = CALM = COLLECTED does the job efficiently.

MAIN POINTS TO REMEMBER.

Balance - Feet - Body and arm movement - I. S. L. [Watch your bow stem like a hawk] Body steady at all times.

If you can understand and competently carry out these basic principles you are ready to take a surf boat to sea and begin the hard part of sweeping.

THE SURF.

Although it will provide you with some of the most exciting experiences in your life, you must learn to treat it as a respected enemy. When it is angry it is one of Mother Natures most destructive forces. This love hate relationship will get into your blood and most successful sweeps do battle with the surf for many decades. If you attain a 50% success rate in beating the surf you are very good or very lucky.

SURF SENSE.

Those who have gained surf sense from board-ski-body surfing have a head start in this area. Others must learn this essential attribute. You can watch or ask champion surfers and gain some of this knowledge, but the only practical way is "having a go". Some of the greatest sweeps of all time could not swim, had no original surf sense, broke many boats and nearly killed themselves, many times. They succeeded with pure guts and determination.

There are a few commonsense pointers. Never put the boat in surf where there are rocks or run outs heading for headlands. Look for smooth water before big waves are encountered. Be patient and wait for a lull before taking a boat to sea. When you make your mind up to "have a go", do it, don't stop, start, stop,. You will get hurt. When you crack a wave look for deep water away from shallow sandbars.

COMMANDS IN THE BOAT.

Before attempting surf work the sweep must explain fully the orders they will be giving the crew. They vary from Club to Club, but there are common terms used by many Clubs.

GOING TO SEA.

"In" or "Boat":- Crew jumps in or roll into the boat and commence rowing.
N.B. This could vary in calm conditions and may be:- "In" "Ready to row"

"Keep her going-Where away.":- Sweep feels incoming surf is negotiable and crew goes to full speed.

"Hold":-Crew stop rowing, dig in their blades and hold boat stationary.

"Back up":- Crew back pedal 3/4 pace.

"Back up hard":- RC back pedal full pace.

"Give me one.":- Crew take one forward stroke. Could vary to two or three.

"Take it away.":- This usually indicated that sweep is going to take on the incoming surf without any stops and crew go to full speed.

"Watch yourselves.":- Indicates boat is about to hit a very big wave and crew must watch their oars carefully.

CATCHING A WAVE.

"Ready to row.":- Crew takes start position of rowing cycle.

"Take it away nice and easy.":- Crew begins rowing at half pace.

"Take it away hard":- Crew goes to full speed.

'Come back." **"Come aft"**:- Crew trail oars and take up wave catching positions.

"Come back hard":-Crew crowd into stern of boat as close as possible to sweep.

"Go forward bow":-Bow goes forward down centre of boat towards splash board.

"Go forward two.":- 2nd bow goes forward.

"Get out of it":- Crew members return to wave catching positions.

"Back in your seats.":- Boat has fallen of wave and crew has to row again.

"High side." - Boat begins to roll and crew try to keep it level.

"Out" - Boat reaches shoreline. Crew jump out the same side they got in from.

BOAT SPEED.

To successfully take a surf boat to sea you must have this essential element. This means the crew are giving maximum effort every time you ask for it. You may have to stop them and hold the boat stationary and even back up. But when you give the order to row hard, the crew must react positively and go into a sprinting mode. To be tentative is a sure way to get hurt.

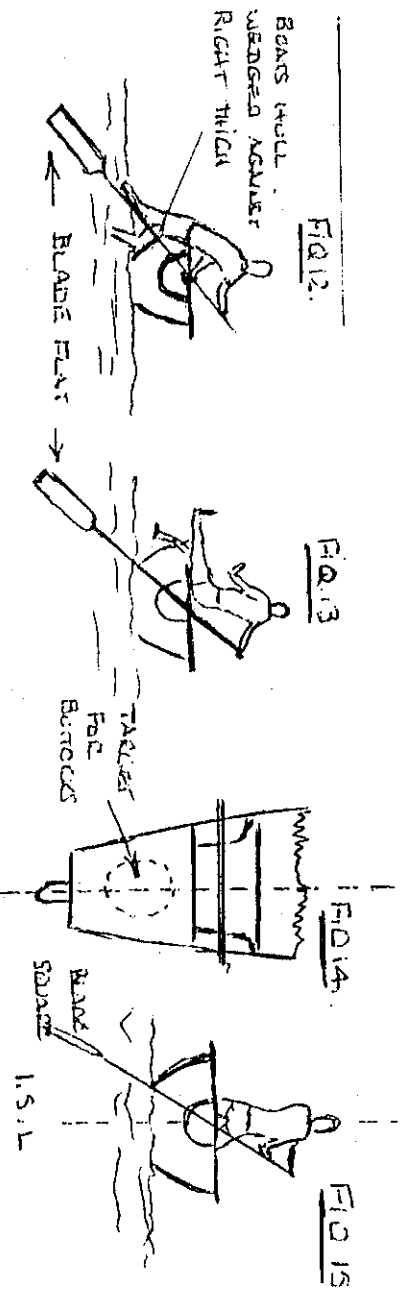
LAUNCHING THE BOAT.

Look for a section of beach where the broken water is coming ashore onto a shallow bank and the crew can stand in knee deep water. For a new sweep it is better to take the boat to this type of area, rather than risk broken gear or injury, by starting in a deep hole or channel. Always select your launching place carefully.

GETTING AWAY.

When you order your crew into the boat it is essential that reasonable calm water and waves are about to happen. As they jump or roll into their seats, you must hold the boat as rigid as possible, watching that the sweep oar is well away from their body. Holding the boat steady and on an even keel helps the crew gain their seats with less rocking of the craft. You can achieve this by grasping the main quarter bar with your left hand and forearm as far inboard as possible, and at the same time wedging your right thigh against the boats stern hull. Your right arm is using the sweep oar for your balance and "earth" [Fig. 12].

As the crew take their first stroke you spring or propel your body towards the middle of the stern deck [Fig. 13]. You then swing your legs aboard and straddle the quarter bar. At all times make sure the sweep blades is flat on the beach or shallow water. Quickly stand erect on the lower deck [Not the wave stands] and turn blade to steering control position. you are ready for action.



The further you are to sea when catching a wave, the more control you will have of the boat. This distance to sea will be gauged by your crews rowing ability and your judgement in selecting a catchable wave. It is better to experiment with these factors and even miss a few waves, until you get the feeling of the run of your boat and the crews power.

Wave formation and broken surf does not always run parallel with the shoreline and you must ^{adjust} this, sometimes, curving wave movement and adjust you I.S.L. accordingly Fig.18.

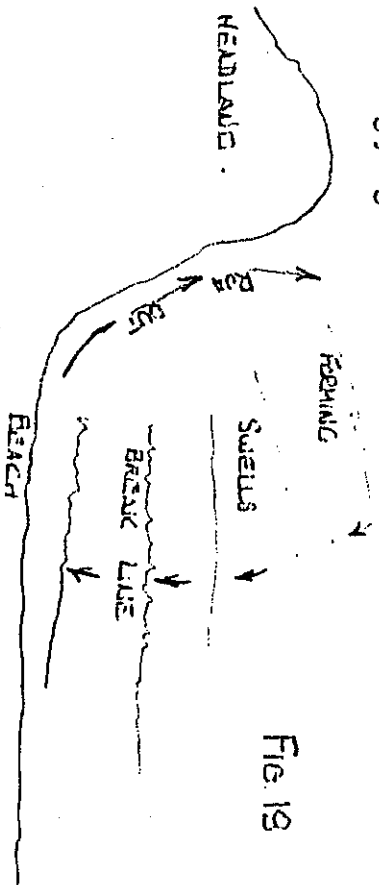


Fig 18

When your boat is in the right wave catching position, you should stand up on the wave stands and look for a likely swell, that you feel will turn into a good wave. On the Eastern seaboard of Australia, most sets of waves come in rows of 3 to 5, with the last two usually the biggest. Beginner sweeps are advised to wait for a moderate set and take the first or second wave.

ROWING ONTO AND RUNNING ON A GREEN SWELL.

Having dedicated yourself and crew to a wave you should start your crew rowing atleast 10 to 15 metres before the swell formation reaches the boat.

This is the most sensitive part of wave selection. Fig.19.

You start your crew at about half pace and as the swell gets closer boat speed is increased. To catch a green swell perfectly the crew must be rowing at full speed, so that you can "feel" it running properly. This feeling will take time to understand and can be explained as your senses knowing that the boat will continue to run without the crews effort.

Before you start your crew rowing be sure your I.S.L. is at right angles to the swell and allow for any wind or current interference. It is a good policy to have a slight degree of right in your I.S.L. and you have that leaning steering posture.

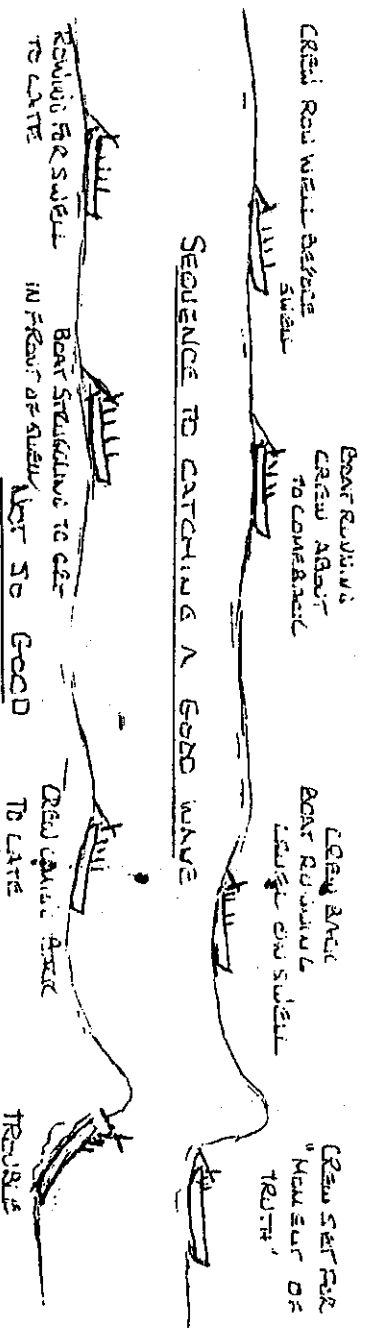


Fig 19.

HITTING A BROKEN WAVE.

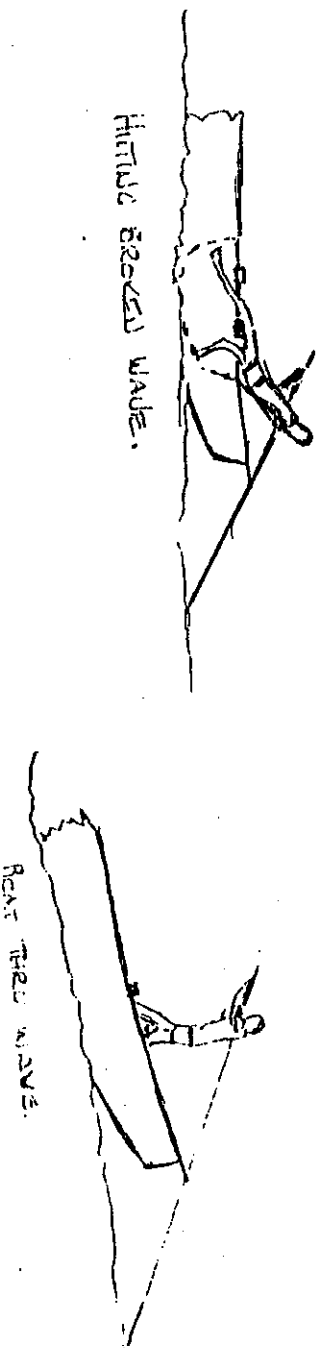
Broken water, if repeatedly, taken aboard will impede you boat speed and you must try and eliminate this problem.

Always aim your boat square into the waves and do everything in your power to try and lift the bow. This is where the 2nd quarter bar comes into play. Extend your left leg under the bar and throw your torso and body weight back onto the stern deck, at the same time making sure the sweep oar handle is well away from your body

[Fig.17a]

Although you may only lift the bow a few centimetres it will save many litres of water coming inboard. As the boat goes through the wave you must quickly regain your normal sweeping position.

FIG 17A



GOING OVER A BIG GREENIE.

This is spine chilling and the boat will land with a thud on the other side of this wall of water. Your job is to land well balanced, on your feet controlling the sweep oar, so that it does not slam down on the quarter bar or strokes head. Calm your crew and get them going again at top speed. Your whole attention is watching the oncoming swells and changing course to miss wild water, stay cool, maintain boat speed, balance your boat. Remember you are never safely through surf until you are atleast 100m past the regular break line and even then you must remain very cautious.

Sweeps differ in which area it most important to control a surf boat, but if you can not get the boat out, coming in does not count. You must really fine tune your skills in this area.

WAVE SELECTION.

This is the most important part of bringing a surf boat ashore.

Before going to sea you should decide where the best boat waves are breaking. You must also give consideration to other surfers safety and if possible place "Surf Craft Training Area" signs adjacent to your selected wave catching area.

It is always best to catch waves into deep water before they run onto sand bars or shallow water. To safely do this you must take your boat atleast 100m to sea, past the regular breaking line.